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Senate Unit Probes U.S., Ex-Nazi Link

Associated Press

The Senate Intelligence Committee has begun looking into alleged links between U.S. intelligence agencies and one-time Nazi Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie, the committee vice chairman said yesterday.

Justice Department officials, meanwhile, were weighing a recommendation that they open their investigation into possible U.S. complicity in Barbie's escape from Europe after World War II, according to department sources who answered questions on the condition that they not be identified.

Barbie, known as "the Butcher of Lyon," was returned to France last week from Bolivia, where he had lived as a fugitive.

French authorities are preparing to retry Barbie, 69, on war crimes charges. He had been sentenced to death in absentia by a military court, but the permissible time for carrying out the sentence has expired.

Barbie has been accused of responsibility for the deaths of 4,000 people and the deportation of about 7,500 others to Nazi concentration camps.

The Intelligence Committee vice chairman, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), noted that "Since last spring, the select committee has been interested in the question of possible ties between former Nazi officials and U.S. intelligence agencies.

"Appropriate inquiries have been made at various agencies, including most recently inquiries about the activities of Mr. Klaus Barbie. The select committee will be pursuing these inquiries in the weeks ahead," Moynihan said in a statement.

A former U.S. intelligence officer and a Frenchman credited with tracking down Barbie have said that American authorities helped him get away.